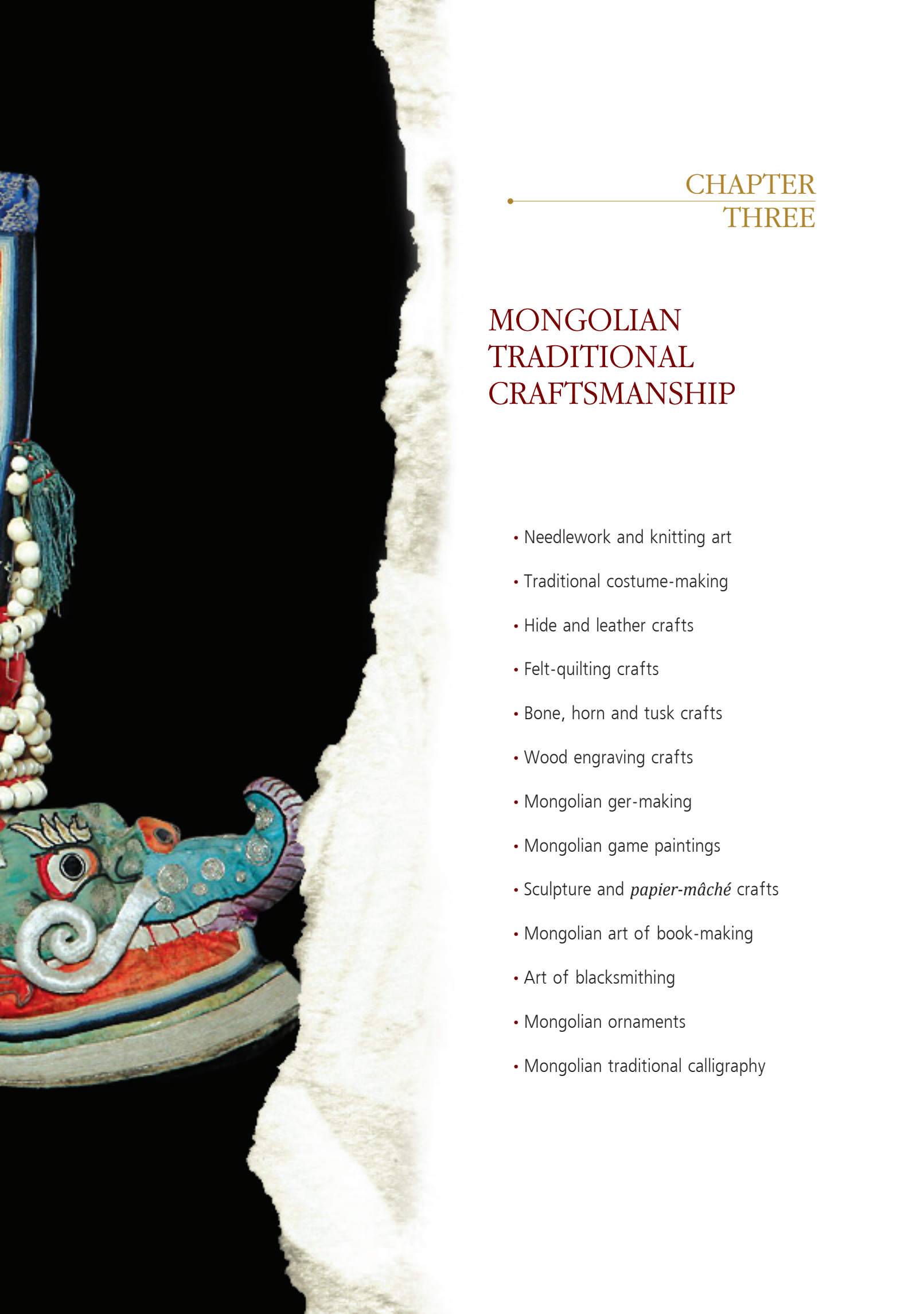






CHAPTER THREE

MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

- Needlework and knitting art
- Traditional costume-making
- Hide and leather crafts
- Felt-quilting crafts
- Bone, horn and tusk crafts
- Wood engraving crafts
- Mongolian ger-making
- Mongolian game paintings
- Sculpture and *papier-mâché* crafts
- Mongolian art of book-making
- Art of blacksmithing
- Mongolian ornaments
- Mongolian traditional calligraphy



Embroiderer, painter Ts. Jamsran



MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

Traditional craftsmanship is one of the largest parts of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage and it bears the attributes of Mongolian intellectual, religious, aesthetic, and symbolic expressions. Traditional craftsmanship has an inexhaustible treasury that is constantly being re-created and enriched as it is passed on from generation to generation.

A unique characteristic of traditional Mongolian creations and works of art is that they embody the nomadic mindset, spiritual beliefs, and mystic symbolism of their oral traditions. The methods and techniques of traditional Mongolian craftsmanship were developed to work with the raw materials of animal products, and have been tested by the livelihood and aesthetic needs of nomadic people over the time.

Mongolian crafts, such as the double-silver engraving style of *Dariganga*, the steel engraving art of *Dalaichoinkhor*, and the wood engraving and decorating arts for *gers* (traditional dwelling) of the *Uyanga* and *Khankhöhii*, as well as the traditional Mongolian clothing and felt rugs, are well known in not only in our own country but also throughout the Asian continent. While the skills needed to make the Mongolian *ger* or to sew a traditional *deel* had been falling into oblivion, they have been, since the Year of the White Horse, 1990, in the process of restoration and revival.

Let us classify Mongolian traditional craftsmanship into the following items:

- Needlework and knitting art
- Traditional costume-making
- Hide and leather crafts
- Felt-quilting crafts
- Bone, horn and tusk crafts
- Wood engraving crafts
- Mongolian *ger*-making
- Mongolian game paintings
- Sculpture and papier-mâché crafts
- Mongolian book-making arts
- Blacksmithing arts
- Mongolian ornaments
- Mongolian traditional calligraphy





NEEDLEWORK AND KNITTING ART

One part of the unforgettable cultural heritage of the nomadic pastoralists is the art of needlework and knitting. Sewing, stitching, embroidery, knitting, and other such arts have developed since prehistoric times. Herders have used a variety of materials to make their needlework creations, including animal hair, which has been scoured, plaited, spun and twisted, silk thread, animal tendons and sinew, and even parts of plants, including the stems and leaves. They also have used a variety of needles throughout history ranging from those created from whittled stone in ancient times to those made from copper, bronze and iron in later periods.



'Eagle' by S. Tsend Stitch with untwisted thread



A religious item, called *damriin darjin*, made in nineteenth century.

DOUBLE-EMBROIDERY STITCH

Mongolians have used the double-embroidery stitch not only for their national costumes and other clothing items but also for their traditional hand-crafted products. This stitch continues to be used even in contemporary decorative arts.

The technique uses two threads and is created both with and without the use of a needle. Briefly put, the double-embroidery stitch is a meticulous stitching technique made by fastening thread that is coiled around a needle. The stitch requires a great deal of delicacy, patience, and persistence, and at the same time the artistic skills of an artisan. It is done using the seven colours of the rainbow and requires the embroiderer to use his or her imagination and talent.

The distance between each stitch must be equal and the wrapping of the thread must be even as well, whether it is wrapped in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction. It is important to wrap the thread in the same way and to make a continuous line, especially when blending the colours.

Because of the beauty and strength of the double-embroidery stitch, it is used in the creation of many handicrafts and precious belongings. The finer the thread, the better the quality and beauty of the stitch. One can find many of the Mongolian traditional ornaments, including *naiman takhil* (eight offerings), *doloon erdene* (seven gems), *natsagdorj* (thunder of bolt) and *tavan takhil* (five offerings), created using this stitch.



STITCH WITH UNTWISTED THREAD

Zadgai utsan khatgamal or stitch with untwisted thread uses untwisted threads to create unique textile designs. Since this stitch is relatively fragile, it has been used to decorate religious portraits and the costumes of ancient Mongolian aristocrats.





SATIN STITCH

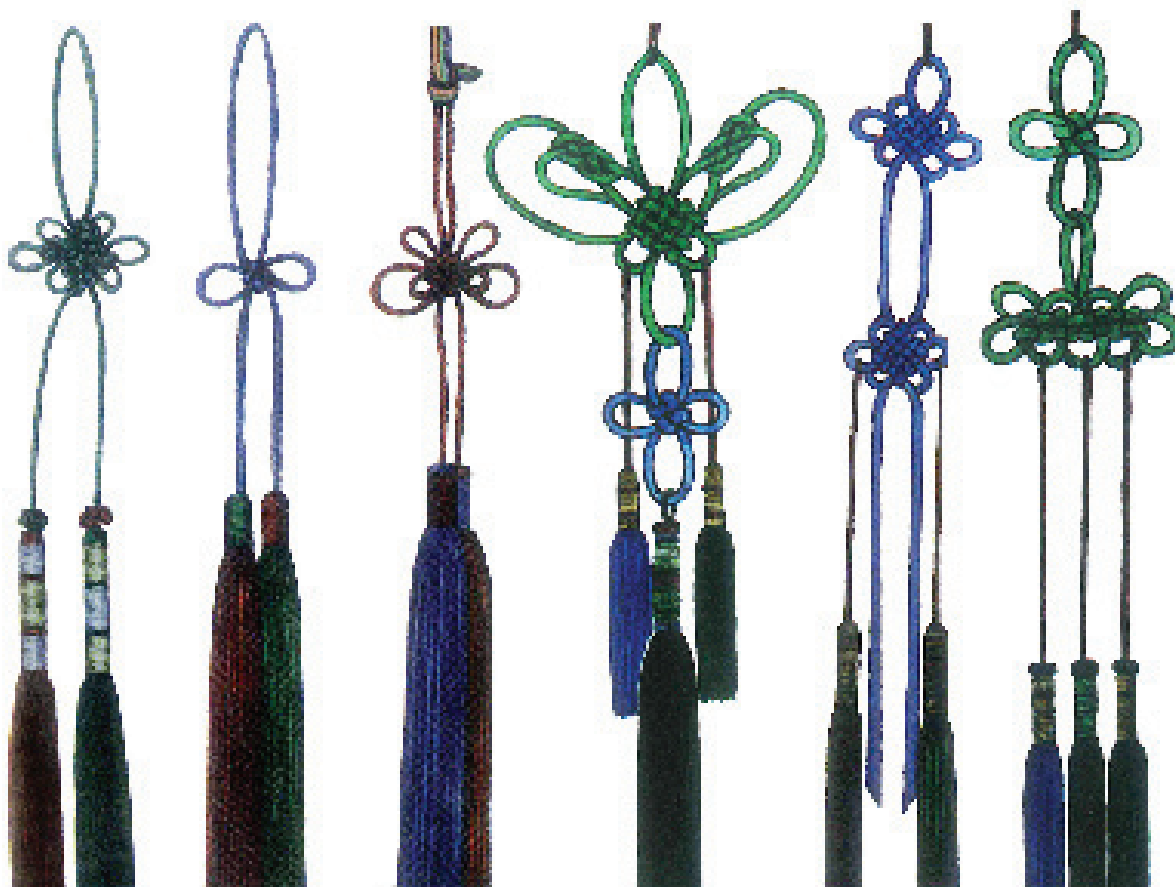
Bitüü khatgamal or satin stitch is a type of embroidery in which two lines of stitches are made that do not touch each other. There are two kinds of satin stitch, the so-called bulge and the flat. The bulge stitch differs from the flat stitch by having the same density of stitches on both the inner and outer sides of the material.



KNOT-WORK

The immense needlework repertory of Mongolian artisans also includes various types of knots. Crafts that include knots include those made from leather, hide, thread, rope, and other similar materials. The knots typically have their own names and are used in particular types of creations. For instance, a knot called *sampin* is used on hats and *deels* as a tip

and button, while *tsakhildgan süljee*, *khurgan chikh*, *gurvaljin zangilgaa*, and *aman khüzüü* knots are used to decorate a variety of household and clothing accessories. The knot called *khurgan süljee* decorates various tools used by the nomads, including the bridle, halter, saddle, and the braided straps used as a tether and hobble.



CROCHET WORK

Crochet work embroidery is primarily practiced by women from the ethnic groups of Altaic region. Various items, such as clothing, bed sheets, saddle cushions and accessories used in the home and by nomadic herders are widely found with beautiful and magnificent crotchet work decorations. The quality of *degee züünii khatgamal* is often dependent on the proper placement of the threaded needle and the sequences of loops created by the crochet.

DOG-TOOTHED STITCH

This stitch is mainly used for closing shirt collars and pouch purses and on blankets. The dog-toothed stitch comes in two types: the single and the double stitch. A single thread is fastened to the loop when sewing the single dog-toothed stitch, whereas two threads are wrapped with one silk thread when sewing the double dog-toothed stitch. When working on the ridges of the material, the stitches starts with short steps and then get progressively longer before shortening again when approaching the starting point. As a result, equal lines appear on the one side of the ridge, and tooth-like stitches appear on the other side.

BULLION STITCH

Another of the Mongolian knitting and weaving arts is *namkh sūljikh*. From ancient times, Mongolian artisans have created religious and artistic products by bending and shaping a variety of materials, such as wood, hide, and paper,

in combination with colourful threads. There are a variety of *namkh sūljikh* styles. One style, for instance, uses special pieces of wood bound together in triangle and rectangle shapes.



The face and head of Tovu Dogshid, a Buddhist deity, made using *namkh sūljikh*.

MESHWORK

Meshwork is so flexible that numerous patterns and ornaments can be knitted and woven into the material using a variety of colourful threads.

RIBBON STITCH

The ribbon stitch is a kind of needlework that uses various kinds of ribbons as threads. It is created by alternating so-called plain and purl stitches.

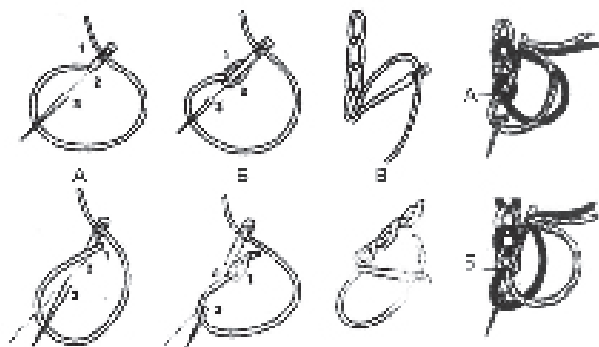
HERRING-BONE STITCH

This stitch resembles a herring-bone and mostly decorates the edges and ridges of various accessories. The first stitch starts from the back side of the object and then the thread is passed over the ridge of the object and sewn with even gaps in the same direction. When the distances between the stitches are even and equal, this fish-bone stitch looks very beautiful.



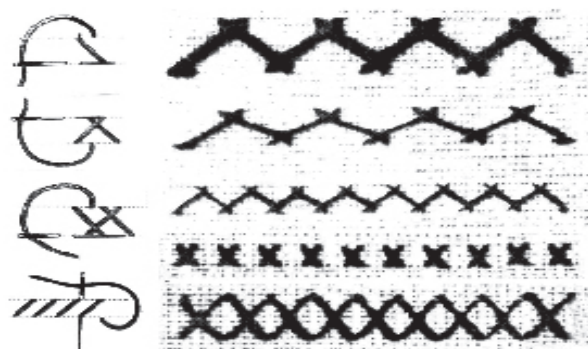
CHAIN STITCH

Nomadic Mongolians often tie up their ewes with a knot called *khonin kholboo* when they milk them in the morning. *Khonin kholboo* or chain stitch is a continuous and beautiful stitch which resembles the aforementioned knot above. It appears on a felt rug that dates back to the period of the Great Hünzü Empire (third century BC) and is still in use today. Due to its strength and decorative appearance, *khonin kholboo* has been used to decorate the collar of *deels*, the edges of footwear and hats, snuffbox pouches, and other accessories and clothing worn by men.



CROSS-STITCH

There are many types of cross stitches, including those that resemble crosses, dashes, and clasps. Anything can be portrayed using the cross-stitch technique, from thematic embroideries and portraits to depictions of nature scenes. Obviously, the appearance and fineness of the creation depends on the type of cross-stitch that is used, as well as the density and colour blends that are used.



COUCHING STITCH WITH CORAL, PEARL AND THREADS

This stitch was mostly used for making clothing accessories that aristocrats and religious figures would have worn in special ceremonial events and rites. Examples of this kind of needlework are exhibited at the *Bogd Khaan Museum*. They include a dragon patterned cape worn by the *Eighth Bogd Khaan*, a coral tasseled and pearl patterned skullcap of *Queen Dondogdulam*, and various cloaks, gowns and sashes worn by Buddhist clergymen.



A vest with pearl decoration.



A remarkable example of *khöndii züünii khatgamal*. An embroidery decorated with various ornaments that was made in 1940 by the prominent artisan brothers, J. Gyalav and J. Choindon from Uyanga soum, Övörkhangai aimag (province). It is kept in the Museum of Oriental Arts in Moscow.)

CANNULA STITCH

The cannula, or needle with tube, is used for making *khöndii züünii khatgamal*, which is stitched from left and right sides and fastens the end of a thread. The appearance of the cannula stitch can be different from one creation to another due to the distances and sizes of the stitches used.



HEMMED APPLIQUE



Photo by B.Batsukh

Example of the artwork created during the middle of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Zeegt naamal or hemmed appliqué is a complex of diverse needlework techniques and is one of the most common types of needlework art in Mongolia. To create hemmed appliqué, one has to prepare two black-and-white versions of the final design. One version is cut out in detail and the other one is painted with different colours, carefully marking the details such as borders, lines and ornaments on the draft.

Then, various silks and textiles are prepared according to the size, colour and other features of the pattern draft and starch is applied to each part. The cut-out draft is pasted with folded edges on this material, employing careful attention and meticulous hands. If the silk fibers are not pasted in the same direction, the creation will look variegated.

After starching, the silk and other textiles have to be flattened and then the pattern is pasted together. The edges are trimmed with a ribbon-like stitch called *zeeg* or hem-stitch. *Zeeg* must be made of three silk threads. Since the *zeeg* is the hem of the pasted materials, it has to be brighter than the background silk in order to distinguish it. There are different kinds of hem stitches in Mongolia. For example, people from the Gobi region have an ancient tradition of pasting silk and other materials without a hem, distinguishing the background with a clear border. Our Fine Arts Museum has a rich stock of traditional hemmed appliques, starting from small hemmed appliques of thirty five Buddha of *Dünshig*.

A variety of items, from simple daily-use accessories to immense Buddhist deities, have been made of appliqué in

Mongolia for centuries.

Appliqué is created according to the Mongolian way of painting, which decorates ornamental lines of items such as flowers, plants, rocks, trees, ribbons with golden outline called *khai*. Also, some special ornaments can be decorated with outlines of small pearl beads.

The pieces with hemming are laid out on the model according to their type and pasted carefully. Then their ridges are pasted on the real background with meticulous and nearly-invisible stitches of fine thread. When the cut-out figures are used as a pattern and pasted on the back of the silk and folded down, they become glued paper layers or *tsavagtai naamal*. As it becomes hard, the glued paper layers make it easy to apply the appliqué. Also, it is common for small appliques to be kept in frames and lockets. However, because these art forms become easily wrinkled when folded or bent, it is not good for large-sized creations.

Appliqué art reached its zenith from the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of twentieth century, as a number of renowned artists such as *Tsend* from *Toisümlin aimag*, *Khasgombo Zoogoin*, and *Jamyan* were greatly applauded and appreciated with their artistic talent and their creations. Although many appliqué artworks were destroyed during the Great Repression of the 1930s, this art has survived and has been re-created by prominent artisans and artists from different generations, such as *U.Yadamsüren*, *Ya.Lunya*, *Magsarmaa*, *B.Tsermaa*, *B.Norolkhoo*, and *A.Tserenkhüü*.





RIBBON-MAKING

Mongolian artisans have ancient crafts of ribbon-making such as *zoos shiree* (circled stitching), *khosh* (parallel bands), and *gyarag bus* (weaved sash). All are, however, rarely practiced nowadays. A field research group, studying Mongolian folklore, first discovered ribbon-making in 1982, along with *khosh nekhekh*-making in *Ömnögov* aimag in 1986 and *gyarag bus*-making in *Dundgov* aimag in 1987, and brought them to the attention of the public. Consequently, several artisans have since taken up work on *zoos shiree* knitting, including D.Batbuyan and S.Khandmaa. Wood engraving artists have also come to specialize in *zoos shiree* making, such as B.Bayarsaikhan.

Zoos shiree knitting is done in a number of different ways, using threads (from 3 to 12, 24, and 32 threads at a time) and pieces of ribbon and rope (in groups of 1, 2, and 3). Nomadic artisans create such traditional patterns as *khavtgai kee*, *öl-ziishüü kee*, *khanan kee*, and *tagnai kee*.



Types of *zoos shiree*



TRADITIONAL COSTUME-MAKING

The Mongolian traditional *deel* (robe) is one of the simplest and most distinctive cultural features of the Mongol people. This and other forms of national clothing are well designed for the demanding Mongolian climate and environment and the unique nomadic ways of life, social values, and customs that the Mongolian people have followed for centuries. Each of the many different ethnic groups of Mongolia has clothing with characteristic designs and styles that express their own symbolic meanings.

The Mongolian hat, *deel*, belt and boots each have their general symbolic meanings:

The hat symbolizes rising power. The Mongolian hat symbolizes prosperity and ascent; its pointed top symbolizes sincerity and honesty.

The *deel* symbolizes equal power. The *deel* symbolizes the smoothness and straightness of human body, while represents the meaning of equality.

The belt symbolizes successful power. The belt symbolizes the consolidation and reinforcement of any disintegrated things.

The vest symbolizes sovereign power. The vest is worn compulsorily during state ceremonial events, affirming that the wearer is a state citizen. It is, thus, considered to be a state costume.

The boots symbolize supporting power. As boots are worn on the feet, the “base of the pillar” of the human body, they symbolize strong stability and support.





HAT

Hat is a primary representation of one's social status and is the most respected of the traditional clothing items. The *toortsog*, *loovuuz*, and four-lugged *shovgor* hats are a few of the more than 200 different kinds of hats used by the Mongolians in accordance with various customs. Hats are classified by the season as well as the wearer's age and gender. And hats are also classified by the shape and design of their top, such as the "skullcap," "helmet," and "flag." Generally, the Mongolian hat has a pointed or domed top with red tassels, and a downward line of stitches resembling rays of the sun, which can vary in number and other features by ethnic group. The hat symbolizes eternal prosperity of Mongolia in the world. Various furs and skins are sometimes attached to different parts of Mongolian hats depending on their purpose and style.



MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL GARMENT

The *deel* is a long gown with diagonal or square lapels that can be affixed on both sides. It is the main costume of the Mongol nations and it has lost neither its fundamental design nor style even after centuries of use. The ancientness of the design of the *deel* is suggested by the appearance of pre-historic people wearing sheep skin coats in ancient petroglyphs.

The *deel* has developed to be compatible with the health,

physiological characteristics, and daily life of the pastoral nomads of Mongolia. This garment is also uniquely suited to the harsh weather condition to which the Mongolian lifestyle has adapted. The accessories to the *deel* also serve many purposes: the long cuff at the end of the sleeves can be used as a glove or liner and the wide belt worn with the *deel* is designed for protection against kidney disease and back aches, while also serving as a blanket or pillow on long journeys.





BELT OR SASH

Our ancestors believed that the spirit of each Mongolian resides in his or her hat, belt or sash, and *khet* or traditional lighter. The belt represents one's social status and wealth. There are a variety of belts found in Mongolia, including belts that are knitted and others that are made from cloth, leather, hide, and even silver and gold. Aristocrats of the nomadic pastoral peoples of the past would use belts made of various precious metals, on which delicate ornaments would be engraved and gemstones inlaid. This kind of belt was called an *agsargan büs*. It also had metal decorations from which the wearer would hang their sword, knife, and bow case.

There was an ancient tradition that Mongolian men, when they established a friendship with another, would exchange their belts as a wish for continuous peace and unity with one another. It is said that aristocrats of the past would also engrave three, five, seven, or nine dragons on their gold or silver belts as a sign of reverence to this mythic beast.



A golden belt that belonged to an aristocrat of the Yuan Dynasty. It features the figures of the sun, moon, clouds, and a legendary martin. It is held at the Museum of Asian Art.



MONGOL BOOTS

The Mongolians have long been making and wearing boots, known around the world as *Mongol guthal*, with their distinctive leather bootlegs, hide soles, and upturned tips attached with tanned leather. As there are about twenty different ethnic groups in Mongolia, each displaying and expressing a diverse intangible heritage through their costumes, customs and ways of life, it is obvious that the Mongolian boots will vary considerably in terms of types and designs. For instance, there are *Khalkh Mongol guthal*, *Buriad guthal*, *Oirad goson*, *Tsarag*, and *Tookuu*, each of which is somewhat different in terms of its design.

Mongolian boots are named for the number of the ornaments on it, starting mostly from eight and extending up to thirty-two. The upturned tips of the Mongolian boots reflect the Mongolian wish to “do no harm to nature.” The boots of kings and queens, noblemen and noblewomen, and high-ranking monks were made with beautifully stitched or embossed ornaments. The tops of the Mongolian boot stockings are traditionally made using the satin stitch. They also often make use of the chain stitch and a *shagreen-welt* insertion, and are ornamented with figures of animals that symbolize protection and preservation.





ACCESSORIES OF THE MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL COSTUME

Accessories of Mongolian traditional costumes are made from a variety of precious metals and gemstones. The main accessories that have traditionally hung from a man's belt includes a *khet tsakhiur* (a traditional lighter with flint), a knife and decorated knife case, a cup, and a pouch with a snuff bottle and snuff. Women of all ethnic groups, except for the *Myangad* and *Buriad*, traditionally do not wear belt accessories. Mongolian artisans use a variety of methods to make costume accessories, including steel engraving, tempering, quenching, inlaying, and decorating with gold and silver.







HIDE AND LEATHER CRAFTS

The hide and leather arts are defined by the various ways by which the hides of animals are prepared. After slaughtering a number of their herds and flocks for winter consumption, Mongolians have traditionally salted raw skin and hide, and cut off their ends. The skin and hide can thus be cut in various ways depending upon the appropriate needs, such as: First, the hair from a slice of hide can be stripped off, after which the hide can be tanned and made into a strap or belt. Second, thin pieces of skin can be smoked and made into pieces of sting or lasso. Third, moist pieces of hide can be cut into strings and then used to weave into a basket or other such vessel. Fourth, the skin and hide is processed according to various techniques and then used for a variety of other cultural needs.



SKIN PAINTING

Pictures are drawn and painted on stretched and dried skins. These are usually very ancient.

LEATHER AND HIDE EMBOSSING

Leather and hide embossing is created by soaking leather and embossing it according to the creating figure, using a traditional embossing tool made of cattle and deer horns. After this, it is smoked in a special kiln and various leather straps are stitched on as necessary.

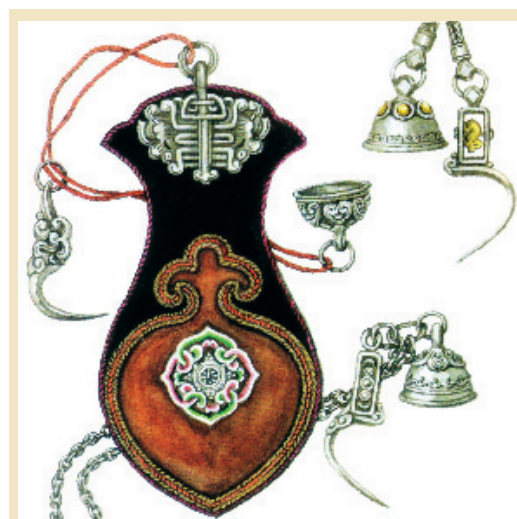
By hide embossing, Mongolians make variety of containers, including canteens, flasks and flagons, which have capacities ranging from 100 grams to 100 litres. They went by a variety of names, including *khökhüür* (milk skin), *eemtei* (hide flask with embossed sides), *khete- vch* (flint-case), *khônög* (large-hide skin), *borvi* (small-hide skin), *tüngertseg*, and *dashmag* (hide flask).

HIDE FLASK-MAKING

The *dashmag* or the hide flask is a peculiar bag which is embossed and stamped with designs. This flask is made from the neck or back part of the hide of an ox or cow without a warble's hole. In order to make this flask, the flesh, meat and hair are scraped off and stretched out with tools. Before the hide becomes dry, it is cut according to an appropriate design; the cut hide is then soaked and stitched with a whip-stitch. After careful stitching, the hide-flask is filled with sands and then branded with shapes resembling those given to domesticated animals. These shapes, made into the neck and sides of the flask, include the *zooson khee* (circular coin-shaped pattern, representing wealth), *üülen khee* (cloud-shaped pattern), *khos khee* (a pair of signs), *guramsan za- gas* (three fish), *ölzii utas* (sign of luck), *tümennasan khee* (sign of great luck), the sign of the sun and moon, *ugalz* (spiral pattern of flowers), *khaan buguivch* (khaan's bracelet), and *khüi modon khee* (sign of an umbilical chord).

ROUGH LEATHER, SHAGREEN AND YUFT CRAFTS

The Mongolian boots, saddle flaps, stirrup flaps, tops of the Mongolian stockings, pouches for snuff, chibouk's case, knife-sheath, saddle bag and quiver are all decorated with ornamental stitches made of rough leather, chamois, *shagreen* and *yuft*. In addition, the straps used to fasten the top parts of Mongolian wrestlers' boots are made from skin, hide and *yuft*, and are also embossed and stitched. In order to make these products, the skin or hide is moistened slightly and placed on a wooden mould. It is then scraped with the horns of antelope, ox, or goat until it is grooved and fitted into the wooden mould, after which it is smeared with glue and filled with narrowly twisted paper or thickly twisted cotton. When the cast is dried and pulled out of the mould and laid out on a flat board, the spaces for the stitch perforation should be visible. The notches are cut into the hide with a chisel or small sharp knife. The patterned model can then be placed on green *shagreen*, after which they are glued and stitched.



TÜNGERTSEG – MAKING

The *tüngertseg* is a type of traditional round container made from a bull's scrotum. When making it, the skin has to be moist, to allow for the placement of the lining and stitching. After stitching the half-round shape, the skin is turned inside out, filled with sand, and then dried and smoked.

LEATHER KNOTTING

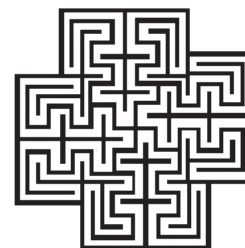
The leather knotting process includes tanning, cutting, knotting, and smoking the hide and skin. Mongolians make a number of different types of ropes and other accessories by leather knotting, including lassos, hobbles, bridles, halters, cruppers, saddle straps, breast-straps, saddle fasteners, girths, bow straps, and other such items. The traditional accessories made by leather knotting are durable enough to endure use for even several generations.



FELT-QUILTING CRAFTS

ORNAMENTING FELT

The patterns are made with ochre. The interlocking pattern starts from the middle portion of the drawn pattern, and then lines are drawn in horizontal and vertical directions. There can be many dots among the circular and square signs.



FELT-STITCHING

Felt serves other purposes than as a covering for the *ger*. It is also embroidered ornately with a technique called *shirekh*, using thread made from camel wool, to make *olbog* or cushions and *üüd* or the felt door for a *ger*. These in turn are used as gifts or mats for guests. In this way, Mongolian art has an aesthetic as much as a practical function.

The stitched-felt flooring for the Mongol *ger* is called *du-galuur* (circle) or *toiruulga* (circumference). Stitches have to start from the centre of the ornament, so that the felt doesn't move. The stitching thread is not tied in a knot, but is instead quilted into the felt. Stitching distances must be equal and also close to each other. When stitching, the needle must be pricked perpendicularly to the felt, and the thread must be pulled with even strength. Usually, *nevtgelzekh* or "sewing with a forward stitch" is used for felt stitching. When using this stitch, the end of the thread is twisted, so that thread knots do not appear on the felt. When the stitches are made appropriately and meticulously, the top and bottom sides of the felt look the same.

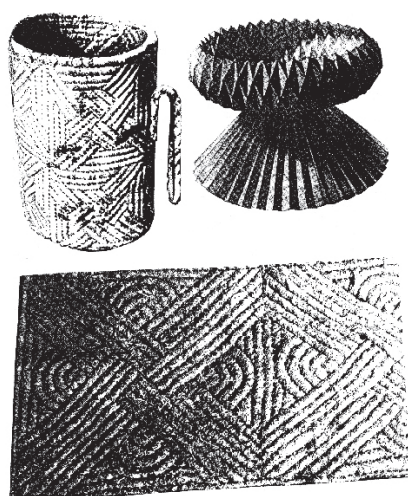
Camel wool hemming is sewn along the border of the *olbog* to reinforce it as well as to embroider it. Nowadays, the number of traditional sewing patterns or *esgii shirmel* are increasing, some of which include the *toonoljin*, *ölzii*, *shurguulga*, *alkh* and *tümennasan khee* signs, to name but a few.

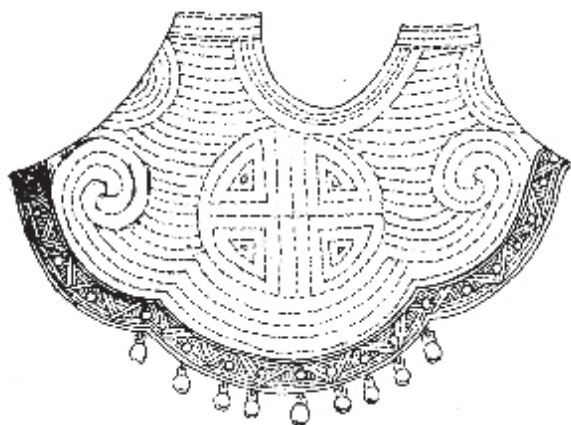
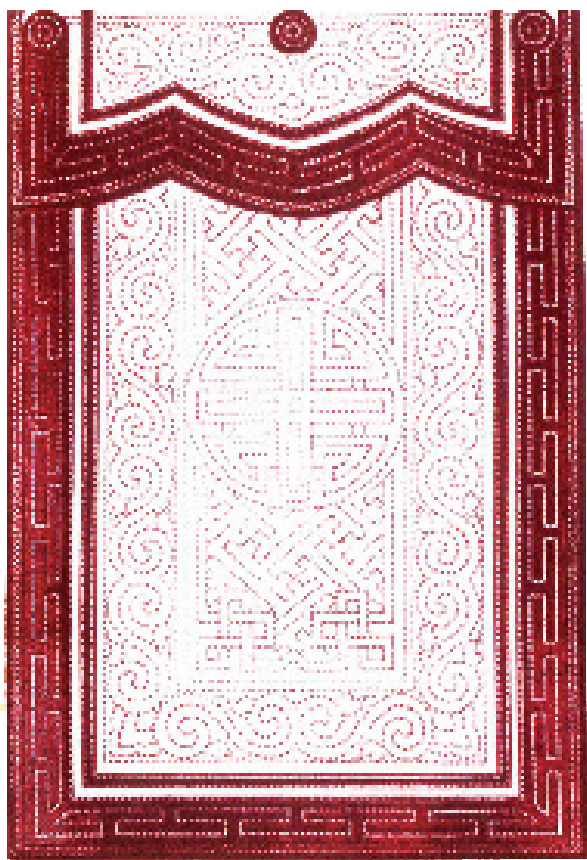
There are two main techniques to stitch the felt: stitch directly on the felt or stitch on a textile background that is attached to the felt.

As for the stitched-felt door, it is framed with blue, red, and brown textiles together with ornaments symbolizing protection and solidness, such as *alkhan khee*. The centre, in contrast, is decorated with cultural symbols or other types of ornaments, including *ölzii* and *tümennasan*. Moreover, ornaments depicting animals, such as dragon, gazelle, deer and other legendary animal figures are widely used in *ger* decoration. They typically use woolen-thread felt stitches as well as coloured woolen stitches.

Felt-stitching has different styles according to the practices of the many ethnic groups of Mongolia. For example, the central *Khalkh*, *Kazakh*, *Torguud*, *Zakhchin* and *Myangad* *esgii shirmel* are very commonly found.

Interestingly, some *esgii shirmel* has a spiritual meaning for the Mongolians. For instance, *tolog*, a small felt rug with special patterns, is used for easing the pain of a mother delivering a baby.





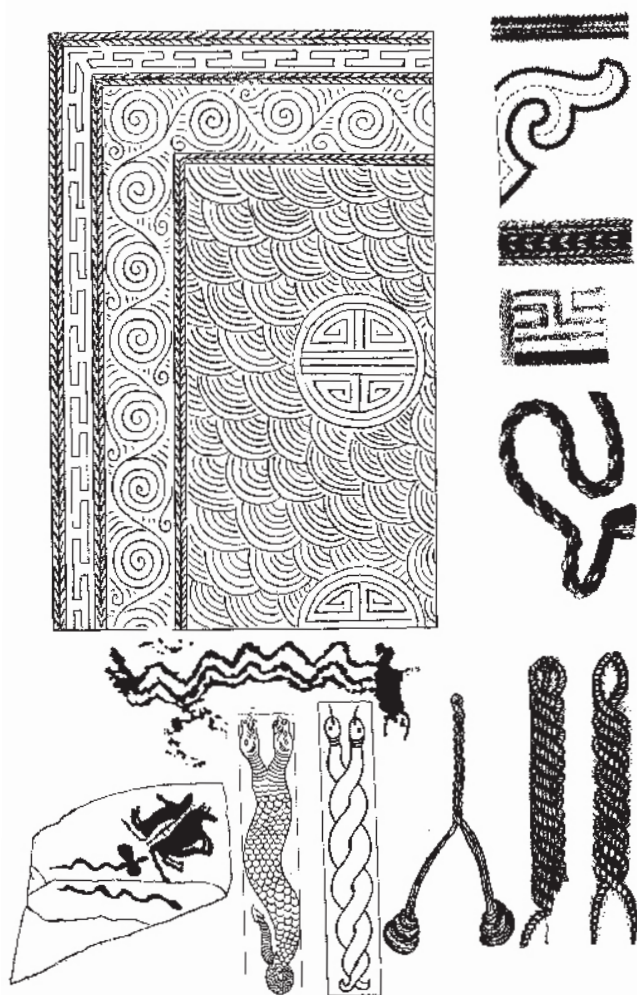
STUFFED-OBJECT-MAKING CRAFT

Chikhmel urlal is also used for appliqués, costume-making, toy-making as well as for making spiritual items. Objects made of felt, leather, and other various materials are stuffed with pieces of wool, threads, yarns, and textile rags.

INTERLACING

Dees is a rope twisted in the shape of an “S” or “Z.” This rope is made from the wool and tail hairs of large livestock animals. Dees is used for making ropes that are interlaced or attached to one other. The interlacing is classified as single, double, black, variegated, and so on. Various types of interlacing, such as *khoshlon* (doubling), *guramsan* (thrice-doubling), and *dörömsön* (fourth-doubling), serve both artistic and practical functions. Mongolians have even invented a mechanic spinner for interlacing.

The traditional art of creating images with dyed wool has almost been forgotten, but luckily this tradition has been rejuvenated by several contemporary artists. Among the new works are “White Fog” and “Flower” by *B.Bayandüüren* and “Blossoms” by *S.Saran*. One felt-maker and artist, *Ts.Tsend-Ayush* creates her own dyes from different plants and has been awarded the UNESCO Award of Excellence for Handicrafts of Asia for her work.



BONE, HORN AND TUSK CRAFTS

Bones, horns, and fangs of domestic and wild animals are boiled and used for creating various items.

TUSK ENGRAVING

Nomadic Mongolians have used the tusks and teeth of wild and domesticated animals for various craftworks. Among them, a tusk sculpture by S. Sengee is amazing. Marked as the best of this kind of art in Mongolia, this sculpture is called “Never Lowering the Flag.” It is 3 meters long and weighs more than 30 kg. Its artistic, aesthetic and symbolic meanings express the prominent successes and progress that the Mongolian people have achieved.



BONE CRAFTS

It is a very old tradition to use the bones of domesticated and wild animals is directly correlated to the cultural and ethical practices of the nomadic Mongolians.

Bone crafts have been practiced since the time that the nomads used various parts of their animals, such as ribs, shins, radiuses, pelvises, kneecaps, ankles, nails, teeth, spines, skulls, and chins, as tools. Later, they started using tusks, canines, and horns, particularly those of strong animals, which had symbolic as well as decorative meaning.

With the development of bone crafts, various types of bone games have appeared. Ankle bones, for example, are used for a variety of traditional games and toys.



HORN ENGRAVING

Horn has been used for nomadic traditional craftsmanship both as a tool and as raw material for products since ancient times. Before working with horn, artisans must store it properly and maintain the quality well by keeping it away from water, oil, humidity and dryness. Nomadic people made a variety of pots, cups, spoons, and forks as well as hobbles, halters, and other household items with horns. Also, many types of household utensils, including the ladle for scooping *airag* (fermented mare's milk), a horse currycomb, and a knife sheath have been made from ox horn, bird-beak (such as swan, goose, and grouse) and decorated with diverse styles and patterns. Ox horn by itself, for example, can be made into a gun powder case for hunters and into a type of purse and a place to store items used in rituals.





WOOD ENGRAVING CRAFTS



Wood engraving has two main types: half engraving and whole engraving. There is a template of engraving that is called *tsoi* in Mongolia. Whole engraving is used for making a variety of items, such as the horse currycomb, a chest, a newspaper table, a tiger-legged table, a bed, and a cast of traditional cookie, as well as an arrow, pieces of a chess game, toys, and religious items and idols. They are sometimes carved in relief.

A number of wood engraving artisans have left their fame in the history of Mongolian craftsmanship. For instance, the artisan *Zagd* (1810-1950), who is famous for engraving minute items, created a Buddhist deity *Yamandag* out of a single piece of coral. He presented this creation to the *VIII Bogd Javzandamba*. A famous artisan *Süren* from *Zavkhan aimag* created a lion on a single grain of rice. He also engraved a Buddhist deity with six hands on amber, which is as small as a human nail.

Animals such as a lion, tiger, dragon, and elephant, all of which symbolize strength and power, are sometimes engraved on the wooden doors of *gers*, while religious symbols and ornaments are engraved on the doors of temples and monasteries. On the top of poles in *gers* and temples, a pair of intertwined dragons is commonly carved.

WOODEN FURNITURE- AND TOOL-MAKING

Various household items and furniture are made out of wood, as this material is light, healthy, and environmentally sound. Hard and bushy trees and plants, such as solidago and silver fir, are mostly used for making kitchen utensils.

One of the unique features of the nomadic wooden furniture is that the artisans keep the natural shapes and characteristics of the wood while working it to make the furniture and tools. For example, they use trees with many branches to make forks, trees with natural grooves to make spoons. They use long branches to make baskets, tree roots to make cups and other kitchen tools, and the wood of strong trees to make walking-sticks.





CAUTERIZING WOOD

Hard and aromatic wood is used for this type of woodcraft. First, the wood is soaked and then cauterized. After these steps, the wood is used to make a variety of items, most of which are accessories.





ADORNING WITH FILLET

Adornment with fillet, a mixture of natural particles that are prepared as a cream, is a way of decorating various objects. Adornment with fillet is a very convenient craft for the nomadic lifestyle of the Mongols, who have passed on this tradition from generation to generation.

There are two types of adornment with fillet. The first is a mixture of porcelain powder, chalk, and liquid glue, which

is put in a sheep shin-skin bag within a bamboo tube and used to decorate objects.

The other type is prepared by mixing liquid glue and black and/or yellow mud to create a fine texture. This kind of *zumber* is used not only for decoration, but also for making small boxes, and large-sized items.



SADDLE-MAKING

Saddle making includes the preparation of the saddle, and the silver equipment and accessories that accompany it. Saddle making is an ancient tradition in Mongolia, as the petroglyph artefacts clearly show. A saddle consists of a wooden body, a cushion, *baavar* (silver decoration), *devs* (saddle flap), *gölöm* (sweat-flap), *tokhom* (sweat-cloth), *olom* (girth), *jirem* (braided strap), *ganzaga* (saddle strings), and iron stirrup.

The base of the saddle is made of high-quality hard timber, but its style and shape differs according to the different breeds of horses. There are many saddle styles and designs, including *Sambuu*, *Borjigin Sambuu*, *Khankhökhi*, *Dariganga*, *Dalaichoinchor*, *Batnorov*, and *Noyon-Sevrei*, to name but a few. Saddle bows are decorated with bone, silver, and metal decorations. *Baavar* was originally a practical item to hold the saddle strings and girth. It later became a decorative item that challenged the talents of artisans. Beside the *baavar*, there is another fine decoration called *ganzagany süvegch* or saddle strings eyelet.

Double-engraved silver saddles of the *Dariganga* and *Batnorov* styles show off the saddle transmission from being a practical item to being a work of art, with the integration of all accessories. These elements unite deep symbolic and aesthetic meanings.





MONGOLIAN GER – MAKING

A *ger* is a traditional portable dwelling of the nomadic Mongolians. Generally, *ger* components consist of a wooden framework, a felt cover, and ropes. From various primitive dwellings to the modern *ger* with its delicate and unique ornaments, a complex system of aesthetic characteristics defines the *Mongol ger*-architecture, which has been passed on for generations.

The size and design of the *ger* components, the structure's outer and interior decorations and its furniture were developed to be comfortable as well as portable and light, allowing pastoral nomads to easily load it on their livestock to move to new pastures. The *ger* comprises all types of traditional arts.

The *ger* is composed of *toono* (crown), *uni* (spokes), *khana* (latticed wall), *toiruulga devsger* (floor cover), *khavtas* (door-board), *khaalga* (door) and *bagana* (pillars). It is impossible to imagine a *ger* without any ornaments and decorations; likewise, it is impossible to imagine the Mongols without the *ger* or the horse.

Engraved *ger* parts typically come in three types: embossed, curved, and concave. Engraved *ger* parts typically come in three types: embossed, curved, and concave.

PAINTING AND DECORATING GER FRAMEWORK

The components of the *ger* that are used for nomadizing are painted with naturally coloured paints, such as ochre, whereas the *ger* intended for settled life is decorated with various ornaments and decorations.

All the decorations and ornaments created on the *ger* components are matched to each other in design and colour and are thus endowed with specific meanings. For example, *toono* (crown) resembles the sun and *uni* (spokes) resembles the rays of the sun. All of the other ornaments and decorations on the door and furniture in a *ger* match to each other in terms of colour and style.

The *böggjin khee* or ring ornament is widely found on *ger* components. This ornament symbolizes tying, binding together, or strengthening, which is meaning well suited to a

structure that is made up of many different individual parts.

The *ger* door, being both the exit and the object that invites guests to enter, is decorated with magnificent ornaments. Every ornament that decorates the *ger* parts has its own meanings. Together they compose the unified symbolic meaning of togetherness or unity.

Sudsan ugalz or vein patterns made with gold are inlaid in the *ger* parts and furniture. Gold sheet is used for making such an inlay on the objects. To make inlay, the gold sheet has to be soaked and dried in the air.

Meanwhile, the background object is painted with dark red colour and varnished accordingly. Then a traditional tool called *tsoolgo* is placed on the newly painted object and the gold sheet is attached with smooth stroking. After taking off the *tsoolgo*, the pattern is formed on the object.



The crown and its cover

The *örkh*, the cover of the *ger*'s crown (the circular piece with radial spokes on the top of the *ger*) is a prototype of the *toono* (crown). The *toono* is composed of a circle frame and auxiliary joints. There are various types of *toono*, including *khoro*l *toono* and *burgasan toono*. *Khoro*l *toono* has two frames, one big and one small, whereas a *böggjin tsamkhraatai toono* or *toono* with ring spokes has a structure resembling the crossings of three wooden sticks. The *toono* is categorized by how it is made, such as *matmal* (bended), *zuimél* (compounded), and *sarkhinag* (comb-like).

Most often, the frame and the inner side of the *toono* is painted with a dark red colour and decorated with gold ornaments with various engravings and paintings. *Alkhan khee* or fret ornament and *tsetsgen khee* or flower ornaments are usually found on the crown decoration. Moreover, typical ornaments used for the *toono* decoration include *khaan buguivch*, *khatan süikh*, *khoro*l, *zooson khee*, *örtei ever ugalz*, *navchin khee* and *üülen khee*.

Spokes

Spokes are the sticks that link the crown on the roof of the *ger* with the walls. The tip of one end of the spoke is set in the crown holes, while the other end is set atop the lattice wall and tied with a braided cord. The number of crown holes and spokes must match in number.

Initially, spokes, which are called *tsuulbar uni*, were made of willow wood. Later, they are made of more common forms of wood. Willow spokes are painted in single colour, such as red, while hewed spokes are painted and decorated with various different colours and patterns. The most common form of ornament is *ever ugalz*, or horn scrolls, which are delicately painted with matching colours, such as blue, green and yellow, on a red background.







Latticed wall

The wall of the *ger* is flexible, allowing it to be folded and moved. Depending on the number of its walls, the *ger* size can be different. In other words, Mongolians measure the *ger* size by the size of its walls. The smallest *ger* has two walls. As the number of wall pieces increases, so does the size of *ger*. Walls made of willow and other types of wood are joined with the use of narrow camel-hide thongs. The timber wall, in contrast, is joined like pieces of a puzzle.

Because the *khana* represents the symbolic meaning of prosperity itself, it is not decorated with any ornaments.

Door

The door is composed of a double board, an inner and outer fringe, a centre and four corners. Every part of the door is decorated with traditional ornaments and patterns. There is a tradition of making doors that consist of four, five, six, eight, and nine panels and are decorated with independent colours and decorations.



Chest, wardrobe, the front and back of couch, table, chair, a bar on which the *airag*-skin is fixed, cage for deity, table for sutra, box and other objects are made of wood. Their front or outer sides are crafted by decorating with various forms of dying, carvings, embossments, ornaments and adornments. Their making and sizes are suited not only for loading and as well as for everyday use.





Pillars

The *bagana* or pillar is the main support of the *ger*. Depending on the design of the crown, *atsan tolgoit bagana* (fork-capital of pillar) and *alkhan tolgoit bagana* (fret-capital of pillar) are used. Also, pillars can be constructed with or without face sides.

Normally, a *ger* has two pillars. However, depending on the *ger* size, there could be more than two pillars. The pillars are painted dark red, and its top and two sides are patterned with multi-coloured ornaments imitating plants and animals, such as *ever ugalz* (horn scroll), *khamar ugalz* (bossy pattern), dragon pattern and cloud patterns.

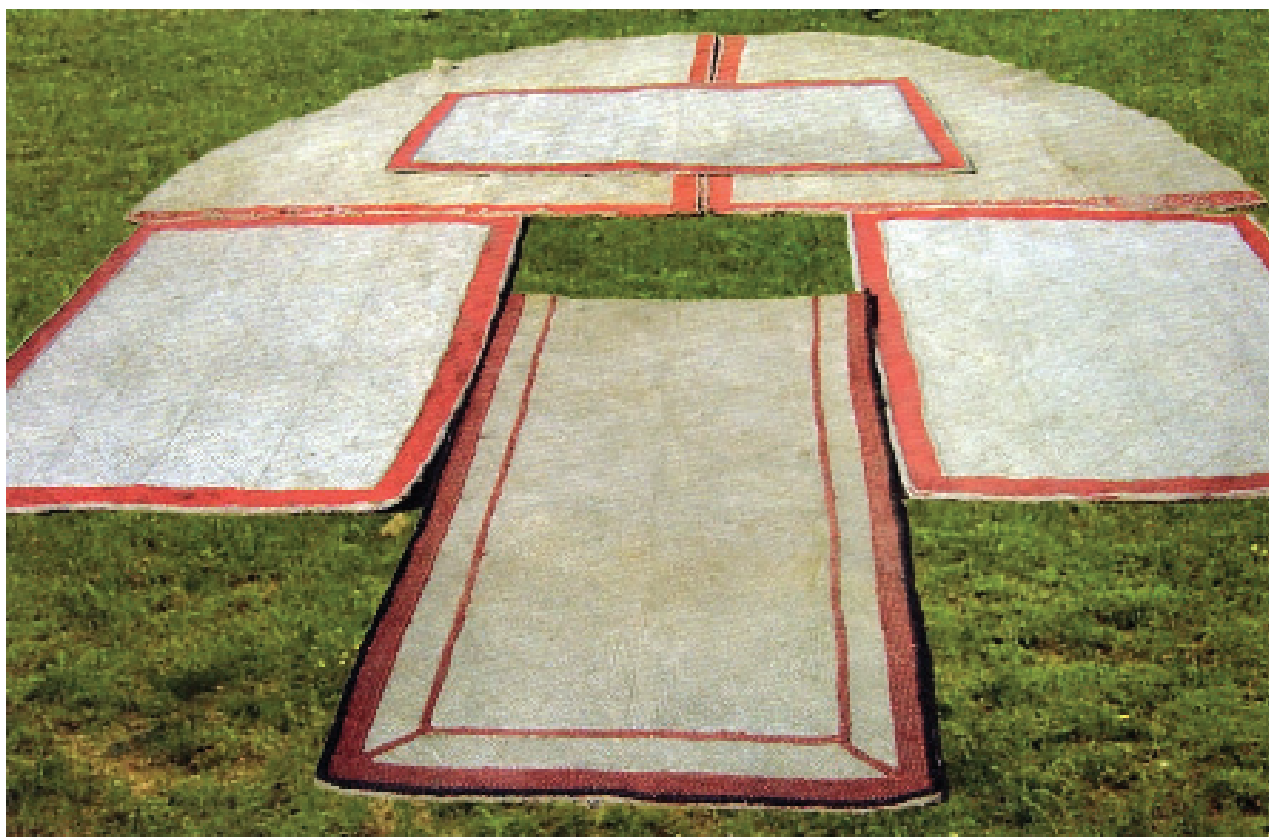
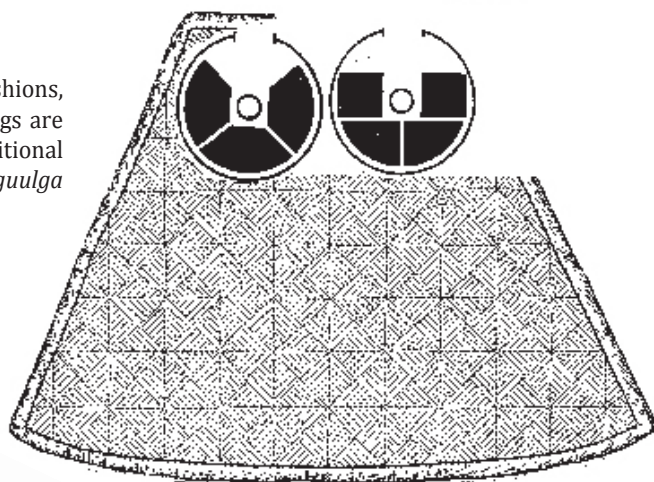
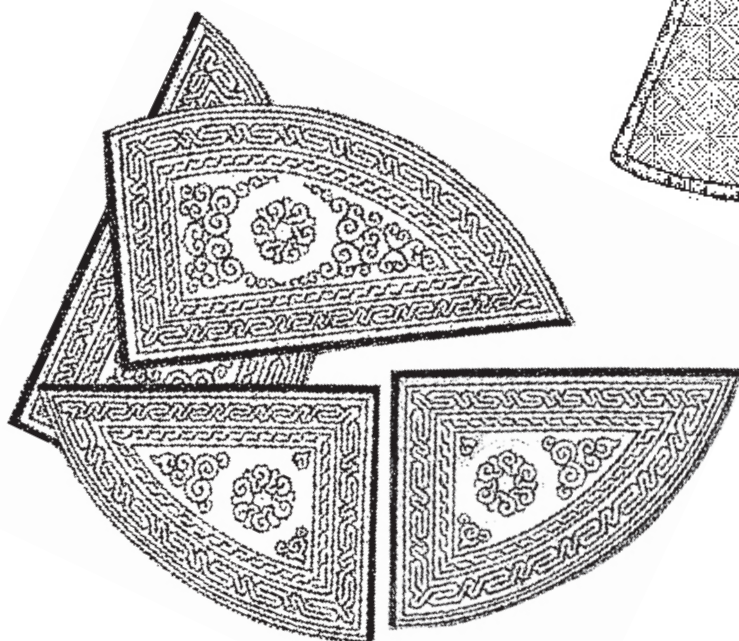
This kind of style is found in the decorations of pillars and other parts of temples and monasteries. Besides various paintings, pillars can also be decorated with fillet and engraving techniques.





GER FLOURINGS

Toiruulga *devsger* refers to the various felt rugs, cushions, and floor pieces used inside of the *ger*. These felt rugs are stitched with camel wool threads and decorated with traditional ornaments, such as *tümennasan*, *alkhan khee* and *shurguulga* (fret patterns).







MONGOLIAN GAME PAINTINGS

Mongolian traditional painting has developed in correlation with all types of art. One of these types is the painting of Mongolian games. *Khözör*, *üichüür* and other games are hand-made out of paper, leather and suede, and have been created and played by the Mongolians for centuries. The nomadic lifestyle, features of nature and the environment, and the unique culture, traditions and viewpoints of the nomadic pastoralists are vividly reflected in the traditional game paintings, which also clearly demonstrate the skill and talent of the Mongolian artisans.

CARD DRAWINGS

In the collections at the *Zanabazar* Museum of Fine Arts in Ulaanbaatar, card drawings clearly show the reality of the royal people, lords, queens, guards, servants, and slaves of ancient times, and often in sarcastic ways.



PAINTING OF UICHUUR: A TRADITIONAL CARD-LIKE GAME

This card-like game is played with dice. *Üichüür* cards are painted using about 130 different animals of seven types; each having its own score. Each of the animals demonstrate different movements and profiles.

Üichüür game paintings in the *Zanabazar* Museum of Fine Arts. The museum holds 136 small cards with the paintings of nature and animals. In this game, there are paintings of 64 different birds, 32 rabbits, 16 musk deer, 8 deer, 3 vultures, 3 dogs, 3 foxes, 4 snow-leopards, 2 tigers and 1 lion, each located in a different environment with different movements.



SCULPTURE AND PAPIER-MACHE CRAFTS

STATUETTE CRAFTS

Statuette crafts are made by moulding a particular material into a cast and then preparing in a variety of ways, including baking, glazing and smoking. The special cast is made based on the traditions of wood, stone and bone engraving crafts. Through this craft, various objects can be made, starting from small decorations to larger religious items. The creation of Buddhist deity figures is an excellent example of this kind of craft.





PAPIER-MÂCHÉ

Papier-mâché is created by pasting layers of light paper on a special wooden or earth cast. *Tsaasan shuupal* or papier-mâché is made with the *ingemel* technique, which is the making of reliefs on objects. *Ingemel* or relief has the following four types:

- a) *khotgor ingemel* (flute relief),
- b) *tövgör ingemel* (semi-fillet relief),
- c) *tovgor ingemel* (fillet relief) and
- d) *büten tovoimol* (sculpture-like relief).



PAPIER-MÂCHÉ WITH CORAL

Shüren shuupal is created by putting a cover of big and small pieces of corals on the papier-mâché. Making of *tsam* religious dance mask demonstrates the unique artistic talent and skills of Mongolian artisans. The *Tsam* mask is made using papier-mâché by casting layers of paper and textile in clay model. After drying the paper mask, the meticulous work to polish and finalize the mask begins, after which the mask is painted and decorated. The mask size is about two times larger than the human head size, and when it is worn, the dancer's eyes peer out of the mouth of the mask. Traditionally, Mongolians use expensive and high-quality materials to make *tsam* dance costumes and accessories. As a result, they demonstrate the wonderfulness and exclusiveness of the design and skill of their artisans. One of the most famous examples of *shüren shuupal* is the mask of the Buddhist deity *Ulaan sakhius* (*Begz* or *Jamsran*), made by *Puntsag-Osor*, which was created by the meticulous inlay of 7,881 various-sized pieces of coral, placed to reflect the lines in the human face. This is a unique and exceptional example of the *tsam* art has been placed on the Mongolian List of outstanding and exceptional heritage arts. Other examples of unique masks of Buddhist deities include a lion-headed *Sendem* and an ox-headed *Damdin Choijoo*, created by prominent sculptor *Danzan* and now exhibited in the *Zanabazar Museum of Fine Art*.

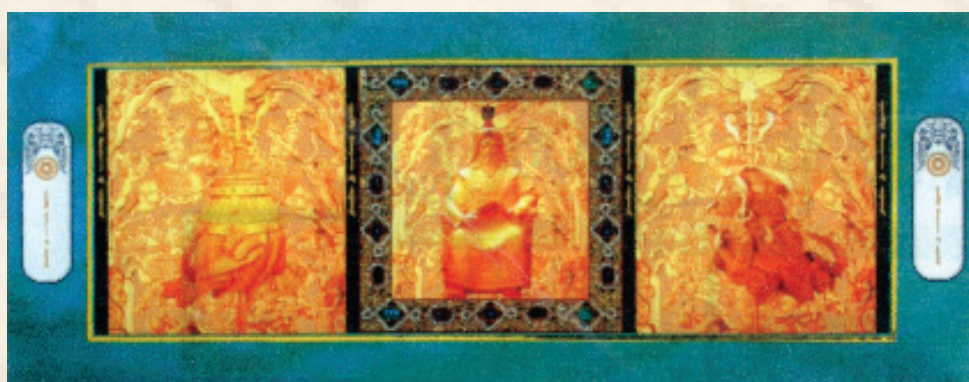




MONGOLIAN ART OF BOOK-MAKING

As the book is one of the most revered items among the nomadic pastoral Mongolians, there are numerous wonderful books created by the prominent artisans in our history.

Mongolian book illustrations have an ancient tradition. There are diverse book inscriptions made by using various items, such as ink, natural paints, gold, silver and gemstones. Moreover, there are many examples of book covers, pages, and titles decorated with paintings, engraved with gold, silver and other precious metals, or covered with inscriptions made of double-embroidery stitches. There are also many carved prototypes of block-printing.



GREAT HISTORICAL TREATISE 'THE SECRET HISTORY OF MONGOLS'

A unique version of Great Historical Treatise 'The Secret History of Mongols', decorated with pure gold, fine silver and precious stones is kept at the State Ceremonial Palace. On this art-work, portrait of Chinggis Qahan is inlaid with brilliants, while the Nine-Fringed White Banner (used in peacetime) and Black Banner (used in war) are embedded with pure gold and precious stones, symbolizing the state etiquette. The texts of 'The Secret History of Mongols' are written with gemstone-mixed ink by the ancient glyph of *Khudam Mongol Script* by *Choiiji Odser* on a finely organic paper and each chapter is decorated with petrified wood from the Gobi, pure gold, fine silver, native copper, gemstone, and jade.

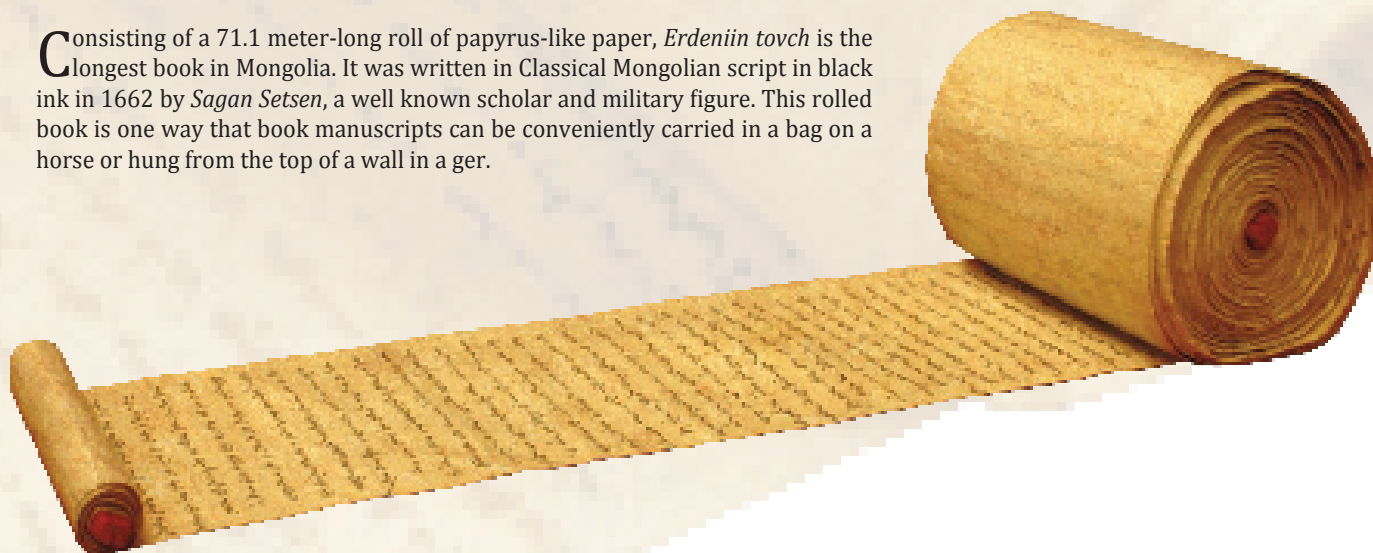


THE BOOK OF NINE TREASURES

A famous type of book inscription is *yesön Erdeniin nom* or “book of nine treasures,” which includes gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, turquoise, coral, pearl, steel, copper, and mother-of-pearl. In nine-treasure book-making, the aforementioned elements are ground into a powder, and then mixed with liquid glue to become an ink-like solution. Book sheets are prepared by the following traditional way: firstly, thin paper sheets are pasted to each other and painted with a solution of black ink, water, and glue. Second, the gutter and top edges of the layered sheets are smeared with smut. Third, the main space of the paper sheet is ground with a flat stone in order to make a smooth surface for various inscriptions and paintings. After this, the sheets are bound accordingly. Then, the previously-prepared ink-like solution is used for writing on the paper sheets with the help of a bamboo pen or brush.

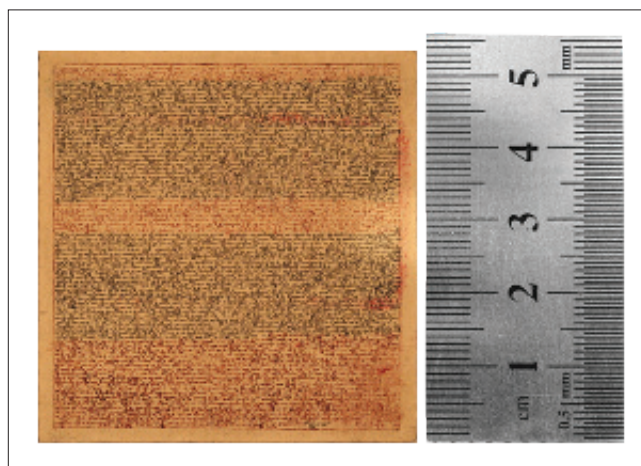
Button of treasures

Consisting of a 71.1 meter-long roll of papyrus-like paper, *Erdeniin tovch* is the longest book in Mongolia. It was written in Classical Mongolian script in black ink in 1662 by *Sagan Setsen*, a well known scholar and military figure. This rolled book is one way that book manuscripts can be conveniently carried in a bag on a horse or hung from the top of a wall in a ger.



EULOGY TO THE GREEN TARA

This small, handwritten book was created by the well-known Mongolian scholar and lexicographer *S. Shagj* in 1914. Written in Tibetan on paper, it measures 5.4 x 5 cm; its manuscript length is 5 cm and its width is 4.5 cm. It is said that the author of this book, *Shagj*, wrote it with a single hair in an ink-dark *ger* with the eye-of-a-needle-like hole and using only the rays of the sun that happened to breach his *ger*. It is impossible to read this minute book without the use of a magnifying glass or microscope.





INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION OF SECRETS

This book is a precious example of the book-making art of Mongolia, as its all pages are created with pure silver folios. All of the folios have gold-embossed figures of Buddhist deities together with marvellous decorations made of corral and pearl. Created around the end of nineteenth century by prominent artisans led by *Dagva*, of *Manzushir* temple, located at the base of *Bogd Khaan* Mountain, there is only one version of this book in the world. Each silver page of the *Nuutsiin khuraangui* has a length and width of 59 x 15 cm, and the inscriptions were embossed on the pages as well as gilded with gold. The work used 1,460 *lan* (or 52,560 kg) of pure gold and silver; each page of the book can weigh from 1.2-3.74 kg. Including twelve chapters of the highest teachings of Ag mantra, this book has 111 pages with 220 sides.



BELIEF

Created entirely out of embroidery by the skilled artisan *Doljin* from *Ar görööchin* tribe in *Tüsheets Khan* aimag sometime by the end of nineteenth century, this book measures 20.5 x 8.5 cm. The text of this wonderful book-embroidery is made using golden threads, and not a single knot was used in the entire book.



JADAMBA

A sutra *Jadamba* or '*Khutagt bilgiin achanad khyazgaart khürsen naiman myangat khemeegdekh ikh khölgön sudar orshiv*' (A Great Sutra Called the One with Eight Thousands Reached into the Beyond of Holy Enlightenment) is written with an ink with gold nuggets on a specially processed dark blue paper, which composes its total 369 pages with a size of 13.3 cm x 53 cm. On the heart of the bookcase there are patterns of '*Ölziit naiman takhil*' (Eight Blessing Offerings) found and on the sides, the *Zendmene* (Wish granting symbol) is created.



DANJUUR GANJUUR

There is an outstanding success of printing *Danjuur*, a sutra with 26 volumes, *Ganjuur* with 108 volumes, both printed in cinnabar-block-letters.

Block-printings

Block printings are made using blocks of wood, copper and other metal. Engraving the inscriptions must be done in using a special technique, so that the printing is done well. An outstanding example of block-printing is Buddhist sutra *Jadamba*, which is kept in the National Library of Mongolia. The *Jadamba* blocks have 1,000 pure copper sheets, on both sides of which the inscriptions and paintings are engraved at the depth of 5 mm. The engravings are vivid and fine, showing delicate skills. This masterpiece was created by over ten artisans, including *Bor Tsültem* and *Shar* under the guidance of *Minjüür Agramba*.

The *Ganjuur* Buddhist sutra, well-known as *Khüree bariin Ganjuur*, was created by the beginning of the twentieth century. The sutra consists of 108 volumes, each with around 500 folios. Each page has the engravings on both sides, demonstrating the persistent and meticulous effort and labour that went into creating this work.



Above are examples of the work of art books that represents the wisdom, mind, and artistic sense of Mongolians.



ART OF BLACKSMITHING

Blacksmithing includes a variety of techniques, including casting, welding, copper embossing, thread inlay, steel engraving, and double-engraved silver. Blacksmithing is inseparable from nomadic pastoral cultures, and is one of the wonders created by the nomadic pastoralists of Mongolia. The steel hearth, fire tongs, and other household tools are made by blacksmiths.

Since ancient times, Mongolian artisans have made weapons and other army equipment, as well as tools and instruments, in a communal manner, meaning that blacksmithing workshops are found in many different sites in Mongolia.

There are famous designs and schools of blacksmithing, such as *Dariganga*, *Noyon Sevrei* and *Archuul*, and although the artisan creates his work according to customary designs, one can find individual styles in their works.

Traditionally, Mongolian artisans transmit their knowledge to the next generation through a master-to-apprentice way. In this method, the master becomes both a parent and teacher for the apprentice. After learning the skills and knowledge of previous generations, Mongolian artisans do not imitate their masters, but instead re-create and develop the proficiency and skills with their own manners and techniques.

Blacksmithing artisans create their works with numerous techniques, from simple weaved patterns to extraordinary ornaments that shows off the outstanding skills, sense of art, and exceptional talents.

Erentei, *Chavgants*, and *Duldaarii* of *Dalaichoinkhor* designs; *Damba*, *Düinkher*, *Molom*, and *Tüvshinbayar* of *Dariganga* designs; *Tojil* of *Batnorov* design; *Tselkhaajav* of *Avdarbayan* design and the *First Bogd Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar*, and many other prominent and distinguished artisans have earned a place in art history for their masterpieces.



Equipment and tools created by blacksmiths.



COPPER EMBOSSING

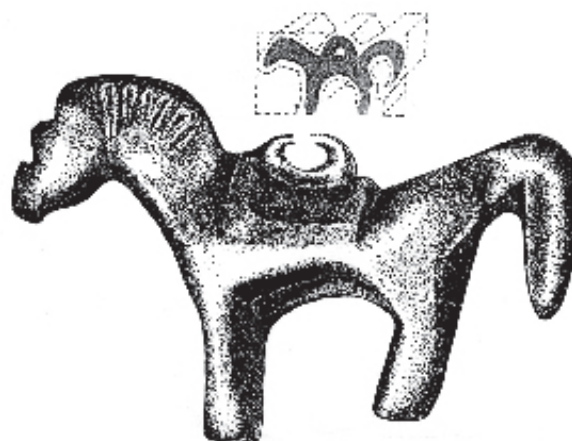
Using the flexibility of copper, Mongolian artisans have created various objects by embossing copper. There is a special tool called *khööltüür*, made of steel, that is used for copper embossing.



METAL FORGING

Gold, silver and other metal alloys are poured into a special cast and processed for various art creations. During the Bronze Age, artisans would make bronze needles, daggers, and knives with the help of stone casts. Later, brass and other metals came into wide use.

Masterpieces, such as “Green Tara and the Five Deities” by *Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar*, are classic examples of this kind of craft. *Tsutguuriin urlal* is one of the costliest types of blacksmithing.



FILIGREE

This is one of the finest blacksmithing techniques. It utilizes silver sheets, silver threads, mercury, and blacksmithing equipment. *Utsan süljmeliin urlal* requires a delicate sense, outstanding skill, and a deep wisdom from artisan.





TRADITIONAL INLAY ON METAL

J*ijjüüdekh* is a way of blacksmithing ornaments that uses engraved steel and inlay-melted silver or silver threads in its grooves. *Jijjüüdekh* has a beautiful appearance, as this way of blacksmithing employs multi-coloured melted metals on engraved grooves of steel.

The pattern and ornaments made of this technique is called *jijjüü* ornament.





CASTING SILVER BOWLS

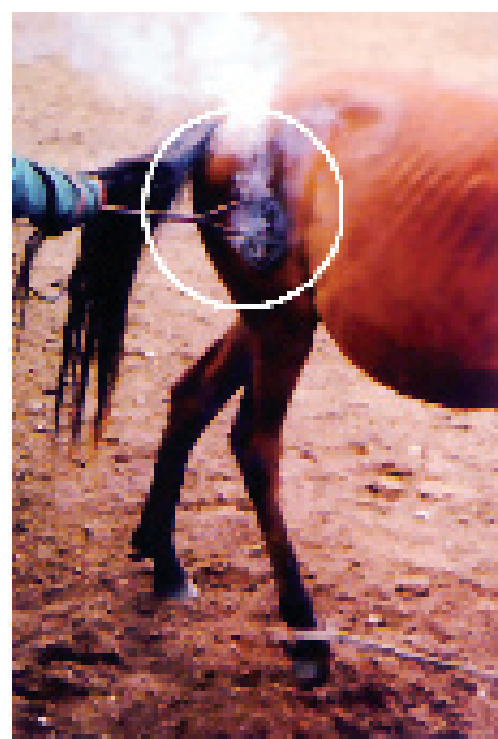
As widely used and greatly respected by the Mongolians, cast silver bowls are one of the most popular items made by blacksmiths.

When casting a silver bowl, a special model of a bowl is used to shape the melted silver sheet with the help of various traditional tools and techniques. The decoration of the silver bowl clearly demonstrates the skill of the artisans, as well as the quality and style of the silver mould. The most popular ornaments for silver bowls include the animal-ornaments symbolizing strength and power, such as the dragon and lion, and geometric ornaments symbolizing longevity and prosperity, such as *ölzii khee*.



HORSE-BRAND-MAKING

One of the most respected household items made by a blacksmith is the horse-brand. Mongolian horse-brands are shaped into symbols that are associated with the tribes or ethnic groups to which the nomadic herder belongs. In making a horse-brand, delicacy is of high importance to prevent the horse from any post-branding wounds.





MONGOLIAN ORNAMENTS

Ornaments are a very important part of the Mongolian decorative arts. They represent traditional artistic expressions that depict the origin, essence, and meaning of various things and phenomena of our life and the universe.

The first ornamental figures and patterns included realistic descriptions of things and happenings; later, they have come to include dots, lines, and geometric shapes.

Mongolians describe ornamental figures in three different ways: animal-ornamental patterns with geometric motifs are called *khee* (pattern), ornamental patterns with round curved grooves are called *ugalz* (scrolls), and ornamental patterns with dualistic features are called *arga bilig* (spiral patterns).

Ornamental patterns reflect the common sense approach to life that is passed on from generation to generation in Mongolia.

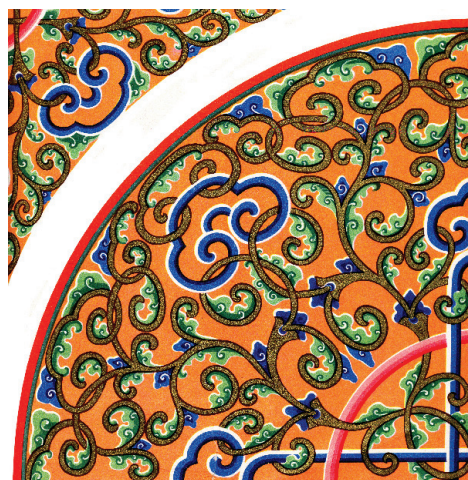
Ornamental patterns are classified in terms of their purpose and placement: central ornaments, corner ornaments, angle ornaments, and fringe ornaments. In general, *khee* (pattern) plays a main role in the design, whereas *ugalz* (scrolls) functions to enrich the primary design. An ornament capable of re-creating the various patterns is called a prototype ornament, and a new ornament that originates from the prototype ornament is called a derivative ornament. Over time, the names, meanings, and purposes of ornaments have changed, and the ornament features have become more abstract.

Mongolian ornaments are classified into the following five types:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Urgamal khee</i> | Plant ornament |
| 2. <i>Amitan khee</i> | Animal ornament |
| 3. <i>Baigaliin düst khee</i> | Natural phenomena ornament |
| 4. <i>Shugaman khee</i> | Geometric ornament |
| 5. <i>Sülden khee</i> | Banner ornament |

ORNAMENT SYMBOLISM

Mongolian ornaments have symbolic meanings that refer to various wishes for life that can be expressed in secret or satirical ways. For instance, there are ornaments that symbolize strength, solidity, love, protection, solidarity, unity, multiplication, prosperity, good faith, longevity, good health, security, fame, and honour. The ornament *ongin khee* symbolizes complexity; ornaments of the sun, moon and star symbolize eternity; cloud ornaments symbolize the wish for regular precipitation; mountain ornaments, the wish for progress; fish ornaments, the belief in the inherent dualism of nature; and *tümennasan* and *ölzii* ornaments, the wish for unending abundance and eternal goodness respectively.



PLANT ORNAMENT

Plant ornaments describe flowers, trees, leaves and grasses. As plant ornaments have evolved, their original realistic depictions became more expressive and abstract.



ANIMAL ORNAMENT

Animal ornaments are one of the great expressions of the Mongolian nomadic animism. For instance, cloud ornaments have been reworked into ornaments representing wild sheep, camels, and dragons. There are various kinds of fish ornaments that depict two, three, and four fish, each symbolizing oriental dualism.



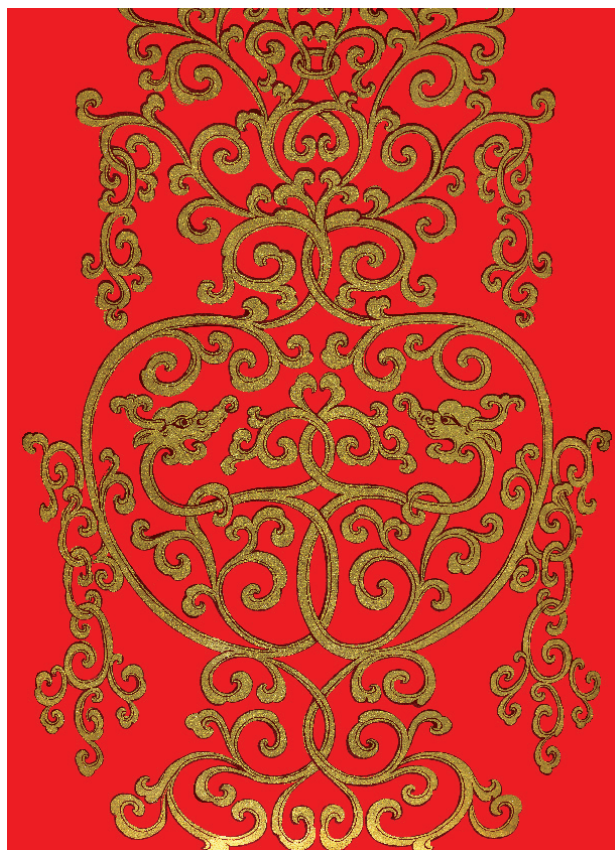
NATURAL PHENOMENA ORNAMENT

The Mongolians have an ancient tradition of describing and depicting various phenomena of nature and the universe, including clouds, mountains, water, the sun, fire, the moon and the stars. Ornaments of this type express the beauty, solemnity, magnificence, power, and mystery of mother earth.

The *dolgion kee* or waved ornament originated in the time of the *Hünnü* and is a beautiful ornament that symbolizes the rhythm of natural phenomena.

The fire ornament is a symbolic expression of goodness, luck, power, and progress. The three part of the fire flame ornament represent the past, present and future.

As shamanism is the initial spiritual belief of the Mongolian people, ornaments of the sun, moon and stars are linked to shamanism. These ornaments appear in vivid and diverse styles. For example, the sun can be depicted as a single circle or as multiple circles. It is also depicted with rays of many different styles. Star and fire ornaments are placed on respected items, such as idols, totem items, and on the case that holds fire-making tools.





GEOMETRIC ORNAMENT

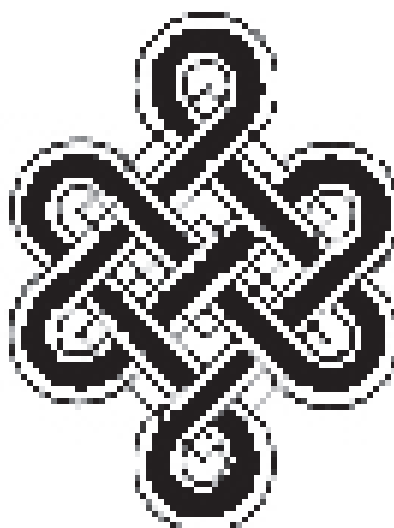
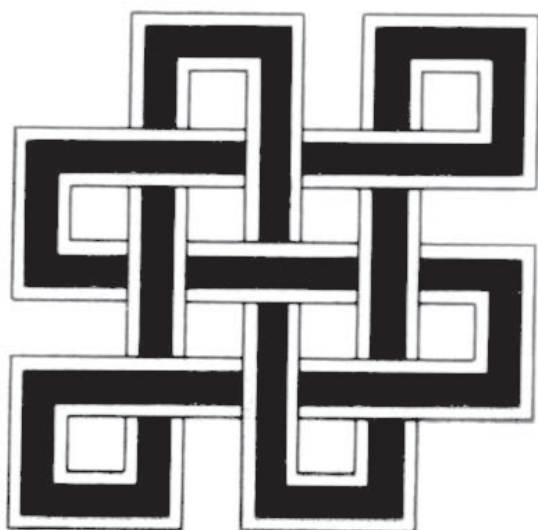
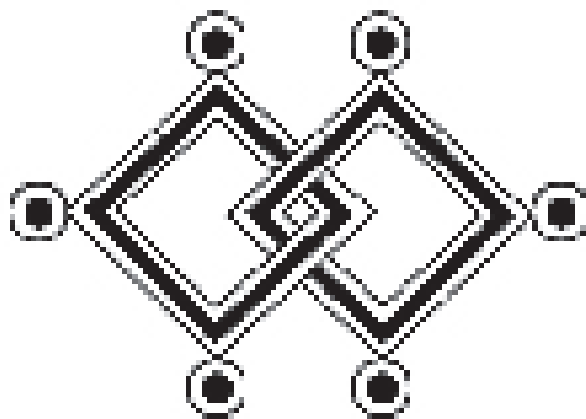
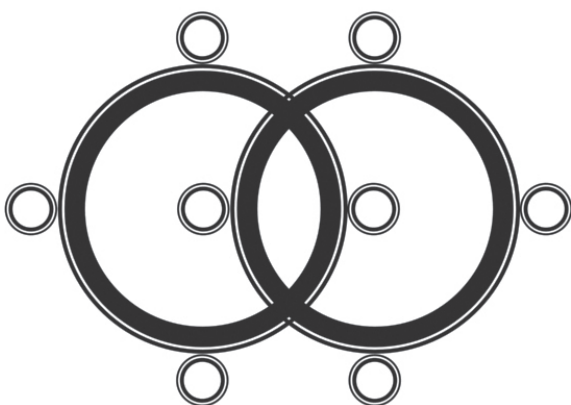
Geometric ornaments also have an ancient history in Mongolia. At first they were relatively simple in design. But they have become more complex and precise. Examples include the modern *tümennasan kee*, *alkhan kee*, and *tümen ölzii kee*, which evolved from the ancient ornament *chagtan kee*, which was used during the period of the *Hünnü* Empire.

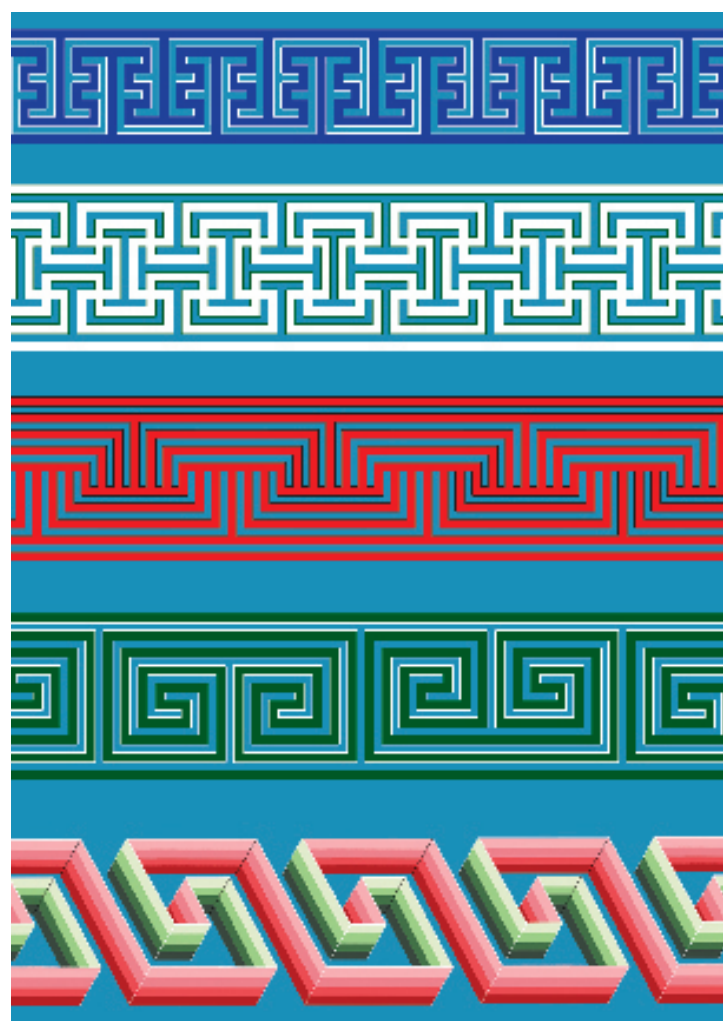
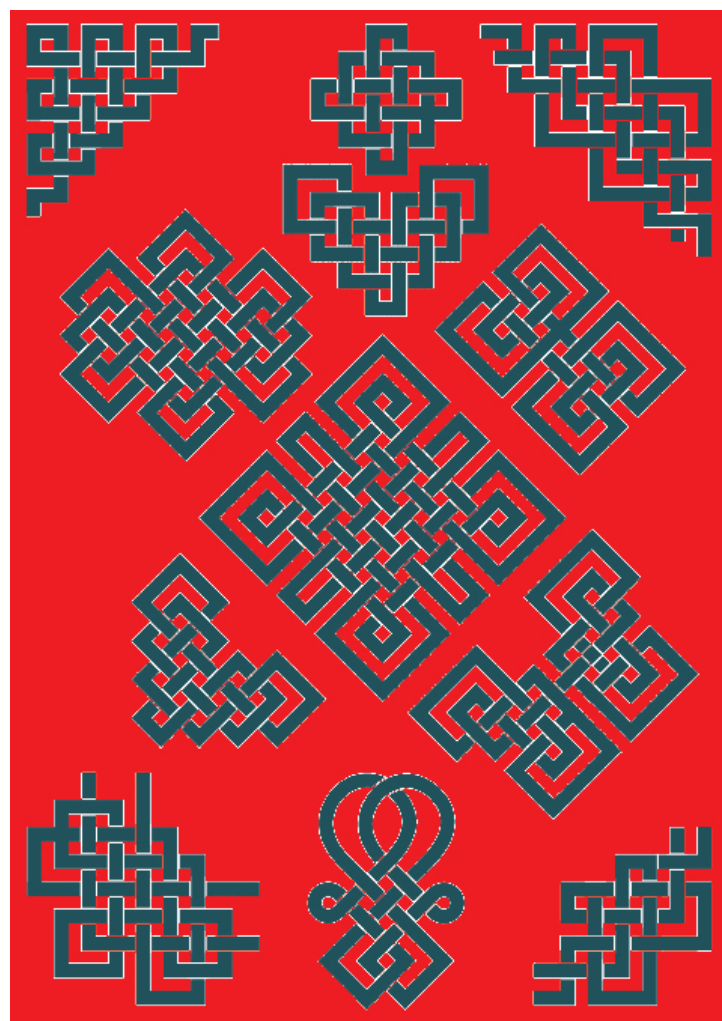
The swastika is another example of a geometric ornament. It originated from a depiction of four horse-heads during the Stone Age and Bronze Age. There are various versions of swastikas in existence, expressing different dynamic meanings.

The triangle, circle, square and other geometric figures evolved with certain sequences and rhythms, and thus they have created a variety of other ornaments. For instance, *zoo-son kee*, *khoroł*, *khaan buguivch*, *nar*, *saran kee*, and *uulan kee* each have the structure of the *khumban kee* repeated fourfold or eightfold.

Mongolian pastoral nomads have used different versions of *ölzii kee* in the ties and knots they use in their traditional ways of life. Among all of the geometric ornaments the Mongolians use, *ölzii kee* is the one that lies at the centre, and that embodies the deepest and most honourable meanings for them. The evolution of the *ölzii kee* has been shaped by where and how it has been used, namely to decorate the centre, edge, corner, or overall background. Mongolians have created various other versions of *ölzii kee*, including *tümen ölzii*, *dan ölzii*, *davkhar ölzii*, *tuuhai ölzii*, *bashii ölzii*, *toonot ölzii* and *zaitar ölzii*.

Ölzii kee, *khaan buguivch* and *khatan süikh* are similar in terms of their basic structure and meaning. It is interesting that the main points that make up their shapes become *ölzii* units.

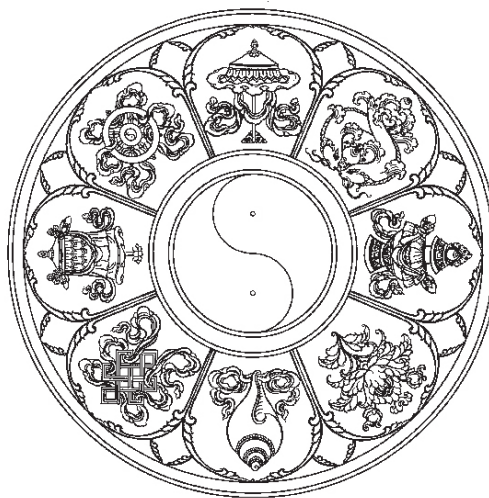






EMBLEM ORNAMENT

Emblem ornaments are complex figures created with a variety of abstract designs based on spiritual beliefs. These could be totem items, such as the sun, moon, sky, stars, animal figures, and other symbols with special meanings.



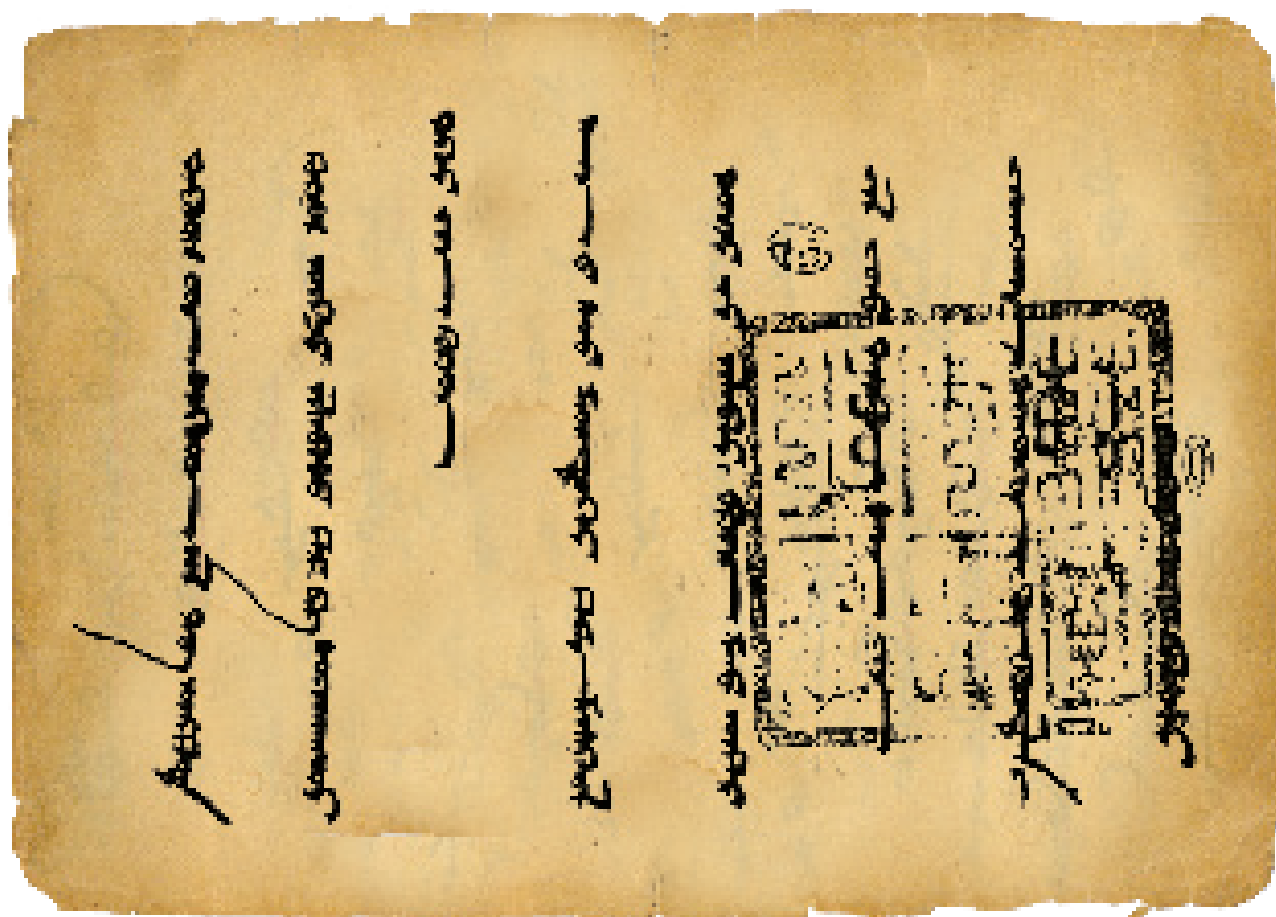
MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL CALLIGRAPHY

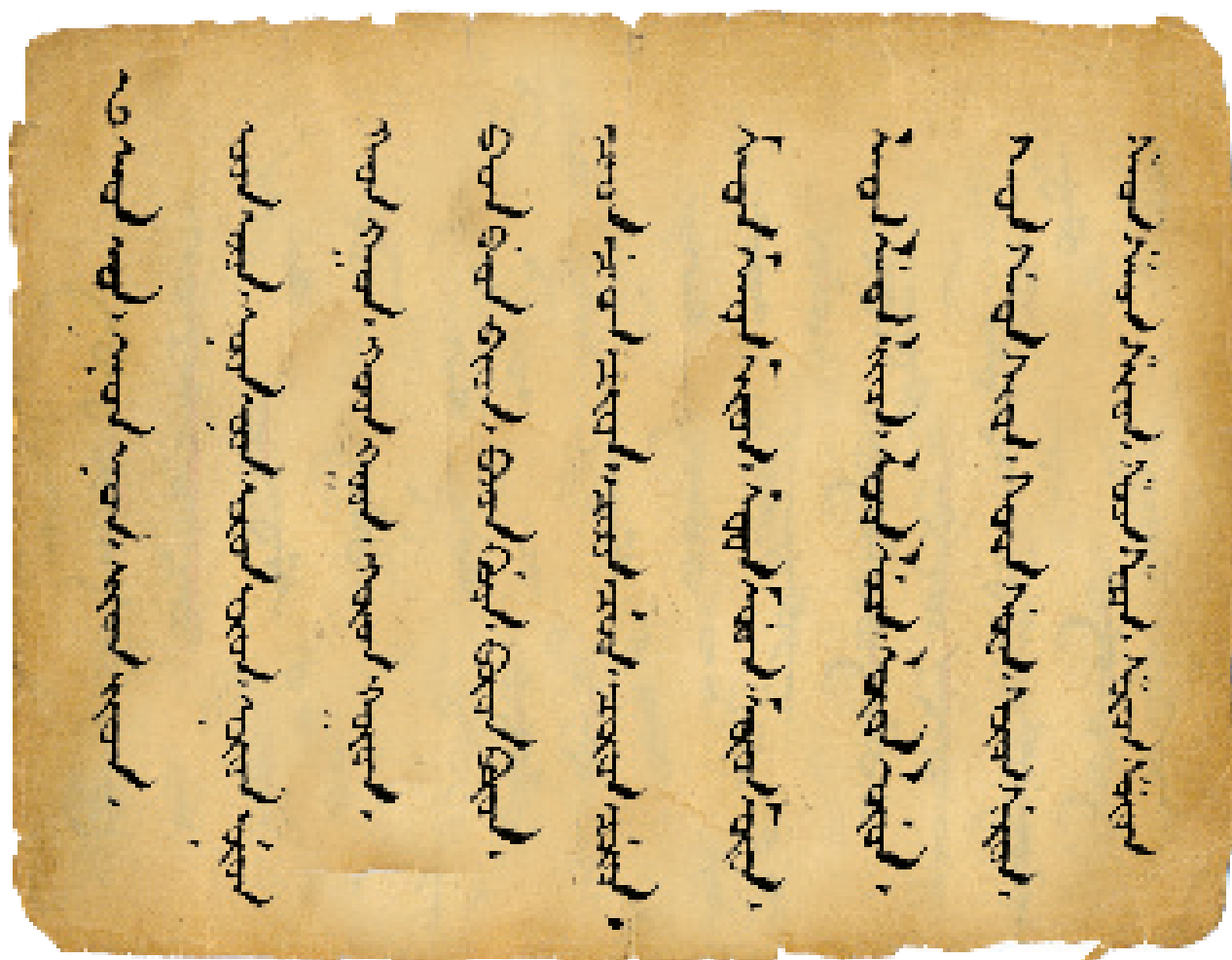
The Mongolian nations have created and used various scripts since ancient times and they keep a complex tradition of calligraphy. Mongolian calligraphy has strictly-observed writing symbols called *tig* (glyph).



ANCIENT GLYPH

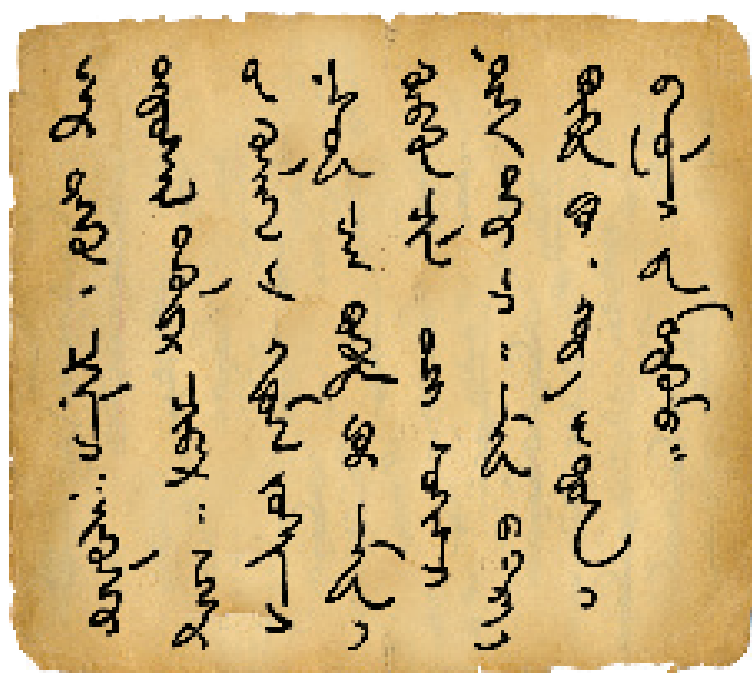
Ancient Mongolian historical chronicles, inscriptions on monuments, and royal letters and documents are written in ancient scripts, using graceful, yet hard-pointed writing tools. Historical and cultural objects with inscriptions, made with the help of a bamboo-brush, and engravings are abundant in Mongolia.





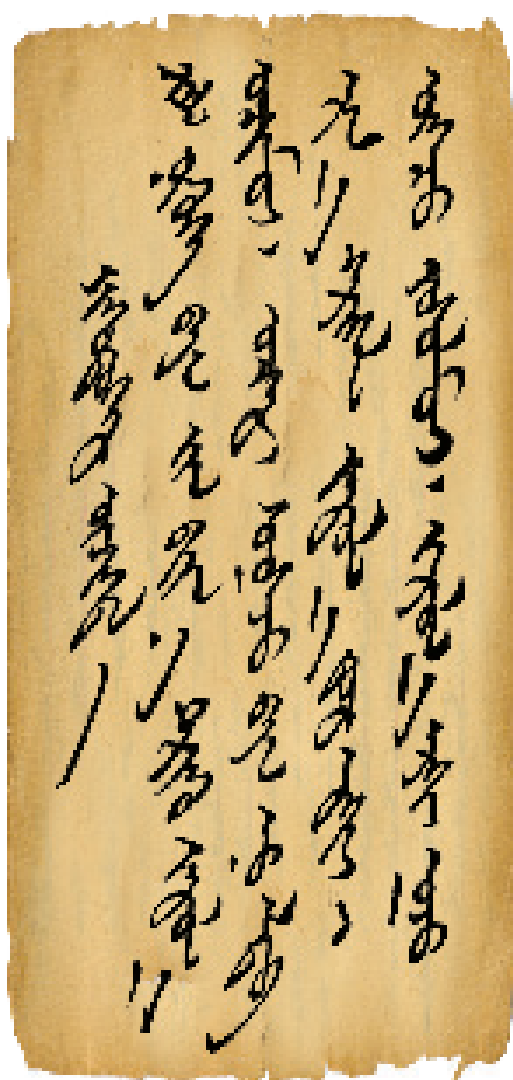
PENMANSHIP GLYPH

When writing with diligent style, all the traits, lines, points, and dots are written with great legibility. Beginners use the diligent style to learn to write using Mongolian script. By mastering Mongolian script letter components, such as *atsag* and *shüd* with this glyph, one can learn the other glyphs easily.



STENOGRAPHY

In Mongolian script stenography, the main line is written short or long, according to the number of *atsag* and *shüd*. Stenography is sometimes called *précis-writing* as well. Artistic and fast stenograph is the highest form of calligraphy.

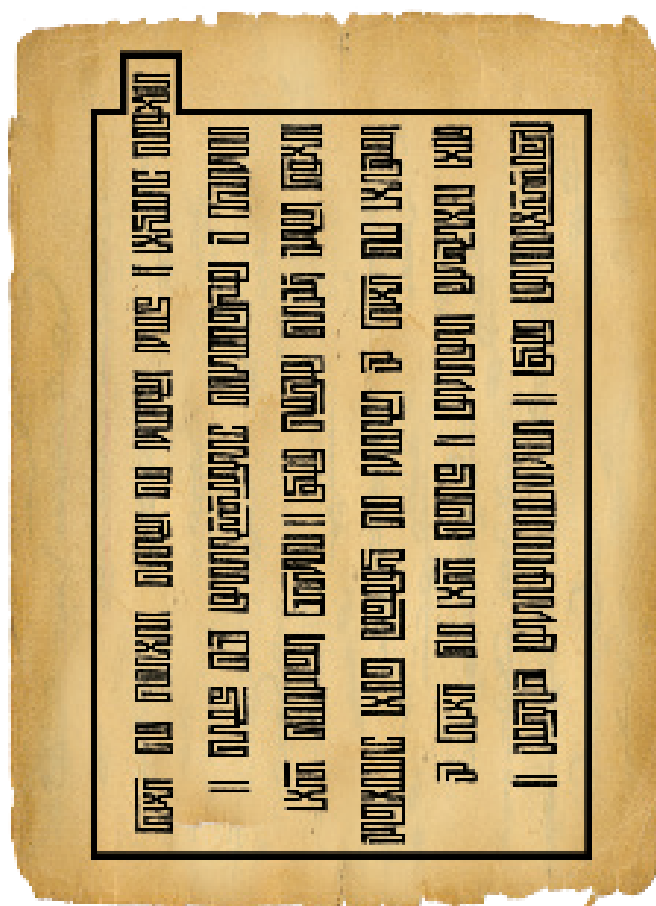


RUNNING GLYPH

The running glyph is thought to have originated from the jotting down of conversations and dialogues. Running glyph is a unique form of handwriting in between the diligent glyph and stenography. (As Mongolian script is vertical, this type of script also appears in a vertical way.) Researchers note that running glyph emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century.

FOLDED GLYPH

Folded glyphs appear on the seals and stamps of the Yuan Dynasty of the thirteenth century, on which letters are folded in accordance with the folding way of the Mongolian script. Using the Mongolian folded glyph, letters can be written in various forms, including square, circle, and vertical forms. Folded glyphs in various artistic forms look like beautiful ornaments and they are given different names, such as 'folded script', 'stylized writing', 'ornamental character' and 'couple melody'.







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